



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Karen F. Morton, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

None.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2013-0142 FYE 2013 Suspense List

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, explained that state statutes require the Town to compile a yearly list of taxes that no longer have to be billed. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed criteria modifications employed by the Town for FYE 2013. He requested approval of the FYE 2013 suspense list in the amount of \$746,242.46.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Morton, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Mayor Somers asked for the aggregate suspended taxes. Cindy Small, Tax Collector, stated she could get the figure but estimated that it is less than \$2 million. Ms. Small explained that suspended accounts are turned over to a collection agency and DMV stops future motor vehicle registrations.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0149 Collecting a Fee for DMV Reporting

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, explained that the Town is mandated to participate in the state's delinquent motor vehicle tax collection service for which the Town pays a fee. Other towns in the state charge a fee for delinquent costs to recover the fee paid to the state. Mr. Pandolfo is requesting Town Council authorization to charge a \$2.00 fee on delinquent accounts that are collected. Discussion followed on the amount of the fee.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0144 Establishment of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 14)

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, reviewed his referral memo and attachments including a progression of FYE 2014 budgets and mill rates compared to FYE 2013; a comparison of the Town Manager budget, and Town Council and RTM additions and reductions; and final adopted RTM numbers for all accounts and CIP projects. 2013 and 2014 revenue figures have been revised since the budget was considered by the Town Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor Flax noted that the RTM significantly cut Planning, Parks and Recreation, Public Works and Public Safety, while returning funds to the subdivisions and the ambulance service. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed the effect the adjusted revenues had on the mill rate calculations. Mayor Somers stated that the Council made reductions where they felt there were duplications of service. She noted that citizen comments or concerns should be directed to their RTM representatives. Watson noted that the State Police are consolidating dispatch and when the Town Council tried to do the same thing within the Town's borders, the RTM did not support it.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 8 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Morton, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Peruzzotti

2013-0145 Establishment of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 14)

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0146 Establishment of Tax Rate for Groton Sewer District Fund (FYE 14)

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Flax, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0148 Mystic River Residential Care Request for Economic Assistance

Discussed

Mayor Somers has been meeting with Elaine Cole, the owner of Mystic River Residential Care, who is planning a large expansion and looking for assistance from the Town. Ms. Cole described the 25 bed home that serves people of any age with disabilities. The facility has been licensed since 1956 and Ms. Cole purchased the business in 2003. At that time, the Department of Public Health inspected and determined that the building could not be brought up to code. Ms. Cole has been under a consent order to rebuild since 2003. In October 2009 she received site plan approval from the Planning Commission to remake the physical plant on the existing grounds. The construction will be done in phases so that the business stays in continuous operation. The site plan requires the installation of six catch basins for a drainage system in Godfrey Street. The Town is planning to pave Godfrey Street in 2015 as part of the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program, but Ms. Cole is requesting that the project be advanced by one year to coordinate with installation of the drainage system for her project.

Mayor Somers explained that the drainage work is a financial strain. This is a unique facility that also serves veterans. The facility employs 19 staff members. Ms. Cole has indicated that she has the funding to install the drainage system if the Town can pay for the repaving by moving its project up by one year.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that there is no formal drainage system in Godfrey Street and as a result of this development, there will be an increase in drainage that must be piped down to High Street. The system will provide a public benefit and is a cheaper alternative to blasting ledge to handle drainage on site. The biggest concern for the Town is coordinating paving with the owner's contractor who will install the drainage. Although there has been discussions about accessing the economic assistance fund, it was determined that moving up the paving will accomplish the same goal economic goal for Ms. Cole.

A motion was made by Councilor Johnson, seconded by Councilor Flax, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0196 Mystic Streetscape Project - Update

A motion was made by Mayor Somers, seconded by Councilor Watson, to enter executive session at 6:43 p.m. to discuss 2012-0196 Mystic Streetscape Project - Update and to invite the Town Manager, Program/Project Manager Rick Norris, and Town Attorney Eric Callahan to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 7:12 p.m.

2013-0143 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)

Discussed

The Town Manager explained that this grant funding would be used to purchase additional in-car cameras.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0215 Community Access Television Application to DPUC

Not Discussed

Consideration of this item was tabled to the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

2013-0107 Cell Tower on Gary Court

Discussed

A public hearing on this item was held last week and no comments were received. The response from the Planning Commission to the CGS 8-24 referral has not yet been received.

2013-0147 Bailey Hill Open Space Temporary Easement

Discussed

Mayor Somers noted this request is for a temporary easement over Town property so that a contractor can access three residential building lots. Town Manager Oefinger described the location of the site. He recommended that the developer provide the Town with insurance and a bond. The easement will be used only during construction.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The Town Attorney has recommended that the easement be granted for one year and extended if necessary.

The motion carried unanimously

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Somers met with the Town Manager and Town Attorney about setting a date to meet with the City Mayor and their attorney. No definitive date has been established.

Councilor Antipas has not yet been able to meet with the Town Attorney on the RTM Reapportionment issue. The Town Clerk stated the deadline is June 9th.

Councilor Flax asked for a referral on consolidated police dispatch and Mayor Somers agreed.

Councilor Peruzzotti noted fleet purchases by the Golf Course Fund and WPCA. The Town Manager noted that their fleet funds are segregated from the Town's fund and both entities have always paid 100% which is why they have positive balances.

Councilor Morton reviewed the most recent CCM state mandates report and noted new senate bill #876 concerning school construction roof pitch relief.

Councilor Antipas noted the paving by the state on Route 1 and suggested it would have been nice to coordinate the projects in downtown Mystic.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked that 2013-0089 Plan to Reduce the Number of Voting Districts be placed on a future agenda and that the Registrars of Voters be invited in to discuss the issue.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.